DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 090 702 EA 006 169

AUTHOR Strickler, John W.
TITLE A Model for Curriculum Intervention in the Desegregation-Integration Process.
PUB DATE Apr 74
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (59th, Chicago, Illinois, April 15-19, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Ability Grouping; Change Strategies; Community Involvement; Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; Elementary Schools; Integration Effects; Intervention; *Organizational Development; *School Integration; Secondary Schools; *Student Participation

ABSTRACT

The desegregation process has pinpointed areas of curriculum reform that are needed to help establish quality integrated educational experiences. A racial and ethnic mix is only a beginning. Institutional procedures have become established in schools which may prohibit the realization of the goal of integrated education. School systems should establish a planned strategy for change to displace those practices that act as barriers. Such a strategy might include (1) an acceptance and understanding of the problem, (2) a program for staff development, (3) the curriculum as a multiethnic mirror, (4) a study of the testing and grouping procedures, (5) student involvement, and (6) evaluation. A brief, suggested reading list is provided. (Author)

ED 090702

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

A MODEL FOR CURRICULUM INTERVENTION IN THE DESEGREGATION-INTEGRATION PROCESS

John W. Strickler
University of Miami

American Educational Research Association

1974 Annual Meeting
Chicago, Illinois
April 15-19, 1974

Paper Reading, Division B

EA 006 169

A MODEL FOR CURRICULUM INTERVENTION IN THE DESEGREGATION-INTEGRATION PROCESS

Institutional change is a slow, arduous, and painful process, reluctantly accepted by some and resisted by most. In the twenty years since Brown, a generation of student-citizens has witnessed a resistance to change on the part of the larger society relative to school desegregation and has shared in the doubts of many the wisdom of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling. Nevertheless, the Courts have been tenacious in the process of legally disestablishing dual school systems throughout most of the South and significant inroads have been made in many parts of the North.

It is not the purpose of this paper to review the processes and events that preceded desegregated education, but to consider those areas that appear to need attention in order to provide quality integrated education in desegregated schools.

Desegregation does not guarantee quality education; it only provides the circumstances under which quality integrated education can be achieved. In fact, having a racial and ethnic mix may contain the ingredients which specifically inhibit the realization of quality integrated education, since this condition does not mirror or simulate many analogous circumstances from the larger society and imposes on the affected

participants an experience that is sociologically unnatural, since everyday living has been commonly experienced in social segregation rather than desegregation. The process of school desegregation has brought together in an institution originally designed for ethnic homogeneity, people who are unaccustomed to speaking and listening to each other about basic human qualities. School desegregation has also brought together people with well-founded or mythical fears, frustrations, and mistrusts regarding people from other ethnic groups. In most cases school desegregation has happened suddenly and without preparation and the resulting institutional shock has illuminated the need for individual and institutional change. Individual change since preconceived notions about the nature of people many times are distorted because of the cultural context of the beholder; institutionally, because many of the practices and procedures that worked well under segregated conditions now threaten the very existence of the institution itself.

The following sections will discuss those areas that the writer feels are crucial and need specific attention as school systems move toward the goal of quality integrated education. The areas that will be discussed are not ones that necessarily have been identified as a result of controlled research, but from several years working with school systems searching for ways to move along the continuum from desegregation (a physical condition) to integration (a psychological condition).

I. Communication

Perhaps the greatest challenge for education today is to create educational environments where solid trust relationships are encouraged and allowed to develop between and among ethnic groups. It cannot be assumed that these trust relationships will happen merely because people of differing backgrounds are attending the same school. There must be a planned program that has as its primary goal the facilitation of positive inquiry about fears, behaviors, and goals of others, whereby human qualities of all members are legitimized and the inhibiting factors of negative cultural stereotyping are recognized and buried. No where is the challenge greater than in the desegregated school to maintain and nurture the identity of the individual and to disestablish a system that might otherwise cause minority groups to feel as visitors in a foreign country.

Such a planned program must include all role groups within the educational setting. To exclude teachers, for example, would deemphasize the importance of the goal and in all likelihood prevent students from observing a frame of reference from which to model their own behavior. To exclude administrators would cause teachers and staff to question the importance of the program; and to exclude students would be to deprive them of opportunities to gain an understanding of the human goals of others.

The importance of such a planned program is that it builds into the system a new set of skills that has the potential of changing the ethos or character of the system, and reflects an inherent quality which conveys acceptance of all individuals and groups.

II. Pupil Assignment

A second area that needs specific attention is the procedures used to place youngsters in the school for the educational experience. This refers specifically to the testing and grouping procedures which are used fairly universally in the educational system. There are decisions made about human potential based on test results that are probably invalid for all ethnic groups. However, in a desegregated school, when test scores are used as a means of ability grouping children, it results in labeling low achieving children at an early age and locks them into an educational track that is impossible to overcome. For many of the less advantaged children the cumulative effect is overwhelming and virtually predestines them to educational experiences that disallow human and academic potential. Desegregated schools are marked by wide ranges of individual differences and school officials should be aware of the fact that many of the testing and evaluative procedures commonly used have the same fallacies as the system itself and many times results in a segregating process

in the schools analogous to de jure segregation in the larger society.

A school system dedicated to quality integrated education should be exploring and implementing means to overcome barriers which deter achieving this goal. There is little doubt that many of the grouping and tracking procedures as used are institutionalized deterrents to quality integrated education and should be changed or modified so that all youngsters have equal access to participate in the mainstream of the school.

In any plan for student assignment, the plan itself does not assure individual success. It should assure, however, that the internal segregation of the races is not possible and that the classroom is where children of all abilities and backgrounds are given opportunities to learn about each other; where fears and frustrations can be met and dealt with; where attitudinal changes can take place; and where children are able to acquire a respect and understanding of all groups.

In order to assure individual success in such a classroom as described above, one must look to the individual child from myriad ways to assess his learning style and to determine an educational plan just for him. It is on this basis that teaching has the opportunity to become a true profession in which diagnosis and prescription are individual matters rather than group matters and individual differences are encouraged rather than discouraged.

III. The Academic Curriculum

A third area of concern in the desegregation-integration process is the academic curriculum. One only has to visit in various schools around the nation to realize there is a "national curriculum" of sorts. There is an amazing uniformity of curriculum in schools over a period of time and the expanse of geography. This is especially true of the subject matter content and the teaching methods employed. Almost universally the academic curriculum is determined by te tbook companies with teaching methods prescribed by the accompanying teachers' manuals. National test scores reveal that teachers do a good job with children from advantaged backgrounds when this method is employed. However when the same content is used with children from less advantaged backgrounds, test scores show that the same teachers fail rather miserably.

The curriculum must become the vehicle for letting all become aware of what their human potential is, and not just those from backgrounds where life's experiences are more in alignment with white middle class schools. This means the selection of content to which all youngsters are able to relate. It means a variety of contents that give learners feedback about themselves from an historical and cultural point of view. It would be wrong to conclude that for a school to achieve quality integrated education all old content and teaching strategies have to be discarded. However, it

can be concluded that academic curriculum should be a mirror to learners, revealing how they fit into the scheme of civilization, their contributions to it in the past and their potential contributions in the future.

The first step to solving this problem is to desegregate the curriculum. This means more than having a black studies course or black history week. It means that schools must pay particular attention to curricular sequencing of experience, starting the first day youngsters enter school so all can develop a psychological identification with the institution. For too many years Blacks and other minorities have had little reason to feel comfortable with the white curriculum. In an integrated school each person "sees" himself in the academic mirror.

IV. Extracurricular Activities

Desegregation many times means that students attend schools outside their home communities. They are tied to bus schedules and have few opportunities to participate in the extra activities of the school. It is not enough to point with pride to a well integrated football team or a student council made up of "A" students. There must be ways found to allow greater student involvement in all aspects of the mainstream of the school. Affirmative action to see that all youngsters have the equal opportunity of participating

should be part of the planned strategy to move a desegregated school to an integrated school. In fact, the disruptive behavior displayed by students in years past can be traced directly to feelings of alienation brought on by the fact that many students do not feel accepted as part of the school and are, in fact, considered unwanted intruders. In an integrated school its not "their school" but "our school."

V. The Roles of School Personnel

Institutional change means that people in the system must change. There must be a realization that the status quo is not good enough and there must be a constant searching for more viable means to promote effective leadership that will result in positive learning for all students.

Instituting change in a school system is not easy and entails a good deal of risk on each individual's part. School boards and superintendents must exert positive leadership, many times in the face of community resistence; principals must learn a leadership style that encourages grassroot involvement of students, teachers, and community; teachers must find content and teaching strategies appropriate for individual learning styles and ethnic backgrounds; and students must be involved in the change process, learning new and more appropriate ways of relating to people who are different from themselves.

In a desegregated school all the social problems of the larger society can be found within the four walls. It is

here where attitudes and feelings are sped up and exert themselves; its here where fears and frustrations are vented toward the perceived reasons for the frustrations. Persons who fail to recognize that they must find new solutions to problems in a desegregated school can expect unrewarding professional experiences at the least, and must accept some of the responsibility for the demise of tremendous human potential.

VI. Community Involvement

The need for strategies designed to involve communities in helping solve educational problems has been long recognized by lay and educational leaders. Desegregation has caused the solution to this need to become one that cannot be left to chance, since the very social pressures that caused segregation in the first place prevent Blacks and other minority groups from participating in educational affairs. The result is that educational decisions are made for rather than with groups. A good policy is one that allows all affected groups to give input to educational decisions. Such processes and policies will provide much greater assurances that the problems occasioned by desegregation will be accurately identified and solved and that all groups will have feelings of "ownership" relating to school goals and the means for attaining them. A school system interested in moving toward achieving quality integrated education must recognize the need for affirmative

action programs that facilitate communication between and among community groups and school personnel and to insure community participation in advising school officials on possible alternative solutions to problems.

VII. A Strategy for Change

It is the nature of institutions over a period of time to become resistent to rather than open to change. Positive change does not come about willy-nilly, but will only result from a planned strategy with specific objectives and the means to bring about the desired results. This means time and effort for study in which the total resources of the school are critically analyzed and barriers to change are removed.

There are at least three specific things that will help solve many of the problems mentioned previously in moving from desegregation to integration. The first is an acceptance of the problems inherent in a desegregated school. A major problem with many is that there is not a recognition that there are problems. However, it is reasonable to conclude that if the school is a microcosm of the larger society, the same problems are inherent within it and should be dealt with positively and honestly. Acceptance of problems is the very first step in making a desegregated school a more humane place to be.

Secondly, there should be adoption of affirmative action. Affirmative action implies goals and strategies for change when problems are recognized and where all roll groups have opportunities for dialogue and exchange of ideas. It also means that change is allowed and encouraged by virtue of a restructuring of the reward system in which rewards are provided for creative endeavors.

Thirdly, there should be the adoption of a cooperative attitude. The climate of a school can act as a catalyst or deterrent to change. More importantly, the climate of the school acts as a model for communicating expected behaviors from students. In a cooperative climate, trust relationships are able to evolve and the school can become an open access school in which learning is an exciting adventure for all--administrators, teachers, and students.

Curriculum, in its broadest sense, is all the experiences provided youngsters by the school. It is impossible to change one subsystem of the school without knowing there will be a reaction from another. Therefore, when a model for curriculum intervention in the desegregation-integration process is developed, there must, by necessity, be consideration for total institutional change. The desegregation process has pinpointed areas of needed school reform to achieve quality integrated education. A racial and ethnic mix is only a beginning, and a planned strategy for change should include

within the model the following components, each with equal importance to all others:

1. An ongoing program to facilitate communication and human relations intraschool.
2. An ongoing inservice program for professional skill development.
3. A study and revision of the methods and procedures used for pupil assignment.
4. The development of multiethnic curriculum content and materials.
5. The development of extracurricular programs that are accessible to all youngsters in the school.
6. A program of student governance.
7. A program for community involvement.
8. An ongoing process evaluation by all role groups to determine the degree to which the goals of integrated education are being achieved.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Findley, Warren G. and Miriam M. Bryan. Ability Grouping: 1970. Center for Educational Improvement, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga., 1971.

Foster, Gordon, "Desegregating Urban Schools," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. XXXXIII, Number 1 (February, 1973) pp. 5-36.

Frymier, Jack R. A School for Tomorrow, McCutchan Publishing Co., Berkeley, Calif., 1973.

Mercer, Walter. Humanizing the Desegregated School, Vantage Press, New York, 1971.

School Review, Vol. 81, Number 3 (May, 1973).